



## 1022nd meeting of the Pacific Coast Numismatic Society

8:00PM Wednesday, May 23, 2001

Knights of Columbus Hall, 2800 Taraval St. at 38<sup>th</sup> Ave. San Francisco

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Birds and coins through the ages.  
Halbert Carmichael

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Bulletin Editor: Michael Wehner

Our guest speaker this month is *Halbert Carmichael*. Birds have been a common choice for coin designs since ancient times. The talk will include illustrations from some of the more than four hundred different bird designs known, a review of the range of different birds chosen, the range of artistic styles used, and the range of different coin making techniques developed over the last twenty-five hundred years. These examples will show an evolution in both man's attitude toward birds and the manufacture and use of coins.

### **1021<sup>st</sup> meeting- April 2001**

#### **Grading Paper Money – Charles Woodruff**

(Review by *Herb Miles*)

Charles W. Woodruff, a dealer in U.S. and world currency, gave us an overview of grading paper money. Charles began collecting, as many of us do, when someone gave him some old coins, in this instance 3 Indian cents, a present from the girl next door when he was 5. Throughout junior high and high school, he collected U.S. coins, mostly 19<sup>th</sup> century.

He has been a dealer for the better part of 13 years, and still deals in coins as well as currency, but currency is the major part of the dealership. However, grading paper money was something he had not thought much about until a fellow dealer asked how he would grade certain notes at a coin show they were attending. After that Charles began studying currency more closely, noting tears, pinholes, creases, folds, etc.

Charles noted that paper money probably began in China, even prior to the invention of coins in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. Sweden has used paper symbols for its copper plate money and Canada has used playing cards cut in quarters with denominations inscribed on the faces. The U.S. began using paper in the 1750s, but it was not very durable so mica chips were added in some currency to strengthen the paper.



In grading paper, the observer first must determine how much "body" is left and how many and how "light" or "heavy" the folds tend to be. One views a note by holding it before a light source vertically and horizontally to see pinholes, tears, folds, and the like. Certain defects become clear when viewing the currency this way, stains, foxing, repairs, tape and tape residue, soiling, etc. Other defects for banknotes are yellowing, aging, brittleness, fading, cancellations, graffiti, corners off, and mold.

### **Exhibits** (summaries by *Herb Miles*)

*Gordon Donnell* brought a "Money Talks" book from the CSNA, some recently acquired GGIE pinbacks, and a letter from India.

*Cal Rogers* revisited his Turkish coin (750,000 Lira) from the Republic of Turkey, whose inscriptions he is trying to decipher (so far, not much) and an 8 reales with Chinese chops and a Liberty Seated half dollar also with chops.

*Michael Wehner* exhibited a Willie Mays baseball token, an Orlando Cepeda token/medal, 2 silver round pieces celebrating the SF Giants, and a rolled cent from Pac Bell Park.

*Phil Nordin* exhibited and stressed to the membership to make your own coin holders with materials one can acquire from Tap Plastics, and incidentally donated a coin holder making kit to the raffle!

*Sarah Nordin* brought some very nice Sing Sing Prison paper money, a \$1, \$5, and a \$10; and suggested that there might exist a \$20, although it has not surfaced to date.

*George Proctor* brought some more Vermont paper money this series with odd denominations as well as \$6, \$7, \$8, and

\$9 notes from Patterson, NC. George also exhibited some large size notes and some American Banknote Company notes.

*Stephen M. Huston* brought to share the only Constantine bronze coin struck at "Sirmium."

*Jerry Schimmel* exhibited a grouping of silver San Francisco school award medals.

### **CSNA Educational Symposium**

Plans for the CSNA are firming up. The event will be held Saturday, November 3 at Fort Mason in San Francisco. Four noted numismatists have agreed to speak on their specialties. They are Duane Feisel, David Lange, Robert Metcalf, and Joe Boling. We are in need of United frequent flyer miles to help in the speaker travel arrangements. Donors of such are solicited and should contact Michael Wehner directly. Hopefully, we can combine enough miles to get at least one free domestic airfare.

### **Grading Paper Money of Sing Sing Prison, *Sarah Nordin***



*Five dollar scrip note from Sing Sing Prison, Ossining, NY*

Sing Sing Prison, on the banks of the Hudson River in Ossining, New York, issued metal tokens and paper currency for use by inmates. Each note measures 78mm x 181mm, and is printed on one side only, on unwatermarked paper. The



basic design carries a large "MWL" in the center, referring to the *Mutual Welfare League*, an organization within the facility begun by Warden Thomas M. Osborne. The MWL motto, "Do Good, Make Good" is prominently displayed across each denomination. Denominations are known for one dollar, five dollars and ten dollars. A twenty-dollar note may exist, but it has not been confirmed

Most Sing Sing notes grade XF or above. This is in contrast to the tokens of 1¢ to 50¢, most of which grade Fine or below. To understand the discrepancy, it's helpful to understand the nature of the facility. Inmates only needed money to purchase low-cost items at the MWL's small store. Tokens would be all that is needed for most purchases; logically, they would see the most use.

It could also be argued that paper money would actually be a liability for both the inmate and the staff. Even a single dollar would have considerable purchasing power, which would make an inmate an easy target for extortion. On the other hand, if an inmate were able to accumulate enough money, he could negotiate favors from other inmates. That's not good news for the prison staff, because paper money would be easier to hide from sight than an equivalent amount of tokens. Comparing the well-circulated Sing Sing tokens to their high-grade paper counterparts, it's very likely that the metal tokens saw hard work in the pockets of convicts who did time "up the river". Meanwhile the paper money probably spent most of its time in the MWL bank.

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## **Make Your Own Coin Holders** *Phil Nordin*

Whether you're protecting your best coins, passing fragile items around a classroom, or preparing an exhibit, rigid plastic holders are a good choice. There's more good news: hard plastic contains no polyvinyl chloride (PVC), which means that these holders provide chemical as well as physical protection. And it doesn't take a trip to a museum to demonstrate that hard plastic holders convey a feeling of elegance that other holders can't match. Here's how to make your own holders. You'll save money over the commercially made varieties, and you're not limited to standard dimensions and thicknesses. What's more, you'll soon find yourself producing holders that are as good as, if not better than, the commercial ones.

### **Before You Begin**

Don't let trade names confuse you. Plexiglas®, Lucite®, polycarbonate, etc, all refer to variations of hard acrylic plastic. Different brands have different characteristics, and these traits are definitely important to users like contractors and engineers. But for making coin or currency holders, one brand name is as good as another.

Plastic comes in a variety of thicknesses. Start with one-eighth inch thickness for your first few holders. For larger holders, 1/4" thickness works well for items as large as an uncut sheet of currency. You may also want to try the 1/4" thickness for the outside of special pieces. The extra heft conveys the message that the contents of the holder are indeed important, and the extra cost of the plastic is very slight.

### **Basic Skills**

Professional-looking holders call for three basic skills:

- ✓ Cutting
  - ✓ Drilling
  - ✓ Polishing
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*Cutting plastic* is most easily done with a special knife, available at a plastic supply store or large hardware center. In addition to the knife, spend at least five dollars on what will probably be your most expensive single purchase: an **accurate** steel ruler. Reason for the accuracy: the more carefully you measure your pieces in the first place, the less time you'll have to spend filing them down later. An accurate ruler will quickly become your best friend whenever you work with plastic.

*Drilling plastic* is easy. For coins, a typical holder consists of a three-layer sandwich, with the center layer containing a hole that matches the coin in diameter and thickness. If you own a power drill, all you need is a suitable size hole cutting attachment from any hardware store. My strategy is cut a hole that's about 2 or 3 mm too small for the coin. Then I use 80-grit sandpaper to fine-tune the diameter for an exact fit.

*Polishing* is a step that will make your holder stand apart from mass-produced pieces. I use a series of progressively fine sandpaper up to 2500 in grit; then I follow with a commercial polish. The process takes me an extra twenty minutes or so for an average holder, and to me it's time well spent.

Try it yourself. Stop by a plastic supply store and pick up a few pieces of scrap. Then see how easy it is to give your coins and currency the protection and beauty of a truly custom plastic holder.

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## Raffle

Seven prizes were won by:

- 1) A 16<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Standard Catalog of United States Paper Money, by Chester L. Krause and Robert F. Lemke went to *Phil Nordin*.
- 2) A Booklet of Blue & Red OPA Tokens for Heating Oil, won by *Ron Johnson*.
- 3) A PPIE So-called Dollar, HK #409 for the Montana Exposition, to *Vince Battaglia*.
- 4) A 10th Olympiad (from the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics) Elongated 1902 Indian Cent with green enameling, to *Gordon Donnell*.
- 5) A Coin & Currency Holder-making kit generously donated by *Phil Nordin* went to *lucky George Proctor*.
- 6) Two Bank of Virginia notes, \$1.00 and \$5.00, to *Larry Reppeteau*.
- 7) Two more Bank of Virginia notes, a \$10.00 and a \$20.00, to *Ron Johnson*.

## Important scheduling note.

Please note that the fourth Wednesday this month is not the last Wednesday.